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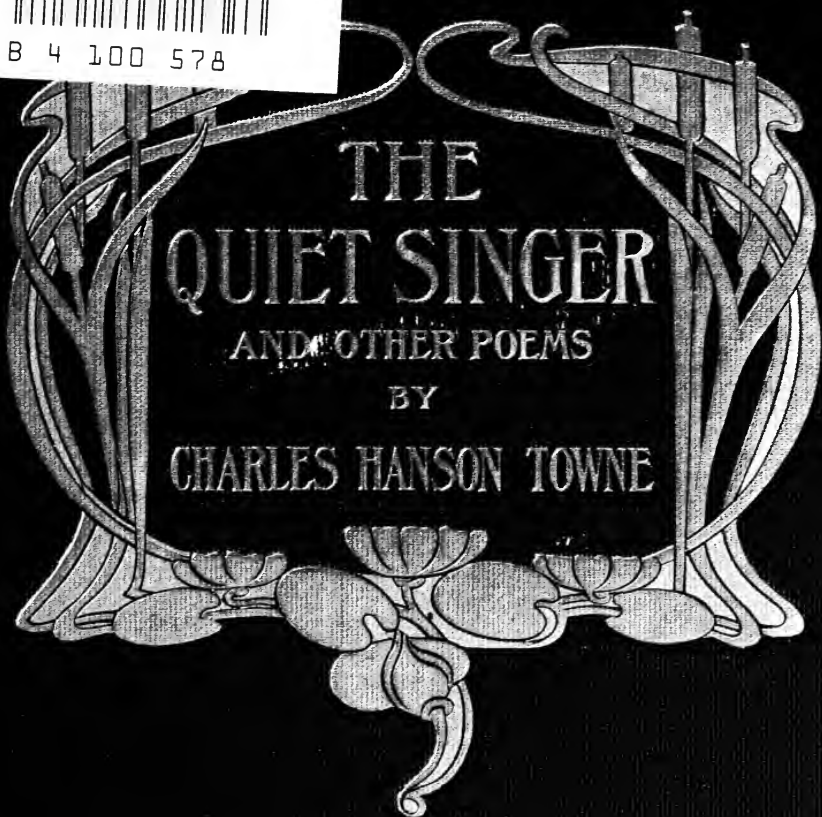
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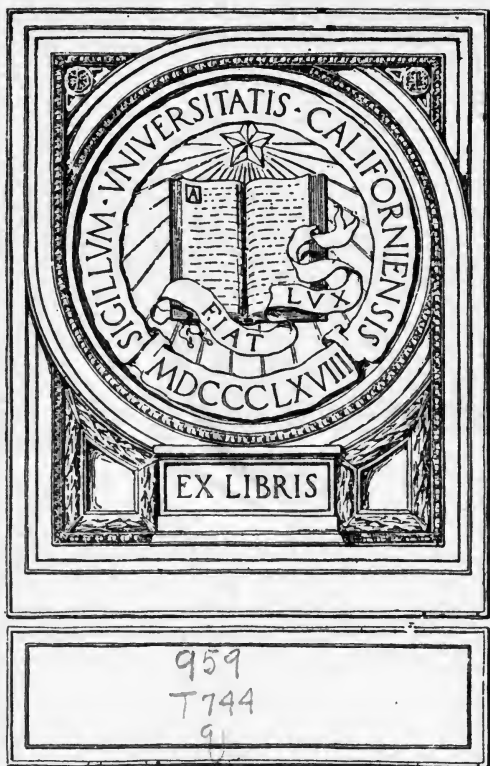
THE QUIET SINGER

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE





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THE QUIET SINGER

THE QUIET SINGER

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
CHARLES HANSON TOWNE



NEW YORK
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1914

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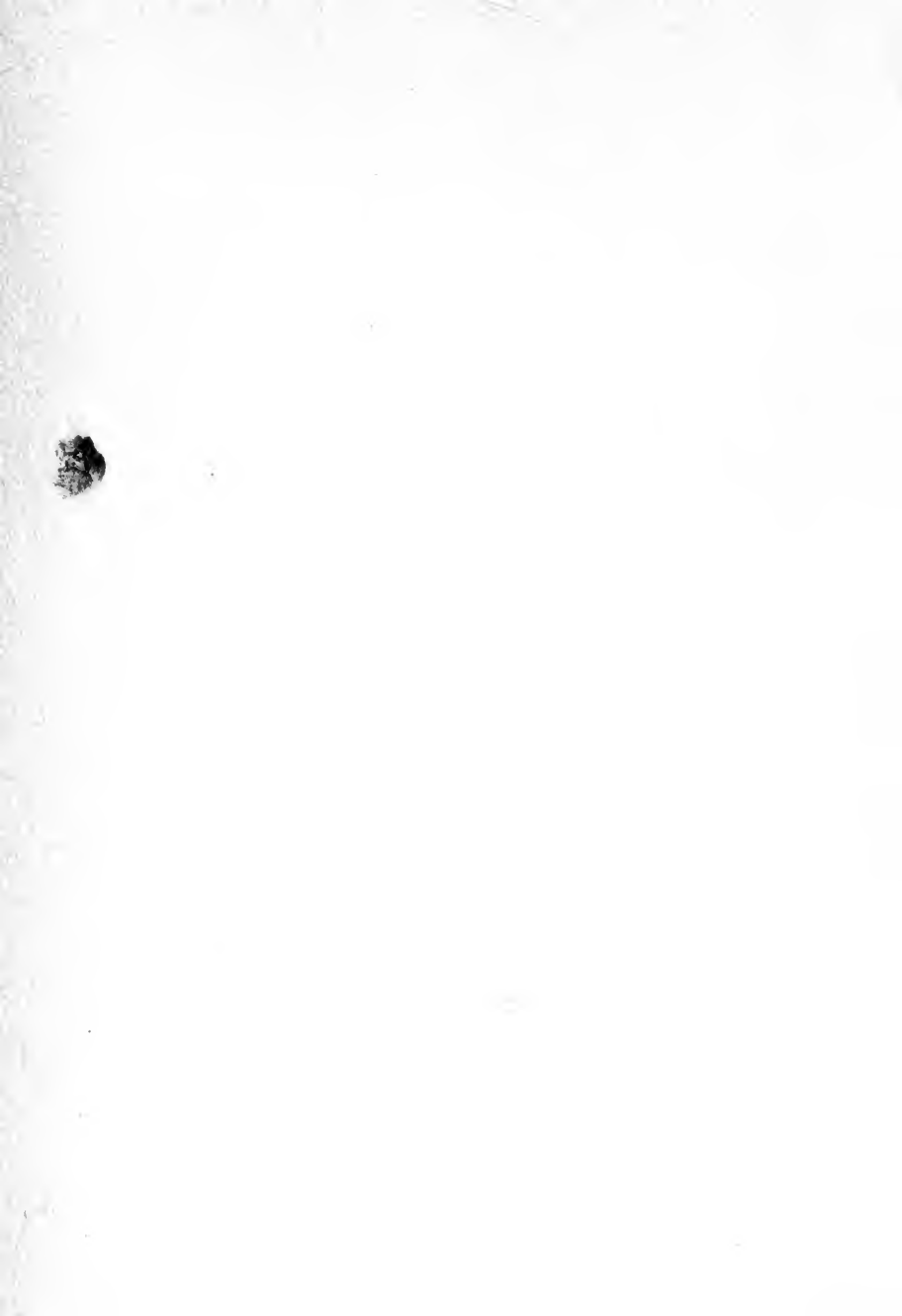
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TO MY MOTHER

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THE QUIET SINGER

(Ave! Francis Thompson)

HE had been singing—but I had not heard his
voice;

He had been weaving lovely dreams of song,

O many a morning long.

But I, remote and far,

Under an alien star,

Listened to other singers, other birds,

And other silver words.

But does the skylark, singing sweet and clear,

Beg the cold world to hear?

Rather he sings for very rapture of singing,

At dawn, or in the blue, mild Summer noon,

Knowing that, late or soon,

His wealth of beauty, and his high notes, ringing

Above the earth, will make some heart rejoice.

He sings, albeit alone,

Spendthrift of each pure tone,

Hoarding no single song,

No cadence wild and strong.

[1]

THE QUIET SINGER

But one day, from a friend far overseas,
As if upon the breeze,
There came the teeming wonder of his words—
A golden troop of birds,
Caged in a little volume made to love;
Singing, singing,
Flinging, flinging
Their breaking hearts on mine, and swiftly bring-
ing
Tears, and the peace thereof.

How the world woke anew!
How the days broke anew!
Before my tear-blind eyes a tapestry
I seemed to see,
Woven of all the dreams dead or to be.
Hills, hills of song, Springs of eternal bloom,
Autumns of golden pomp and purple gloom
Were hung upon his loom.
Winters of pain, roses with awful thorns,
Yet wondrous faith in God's dew-drenchèd
morns—
These, all these I saw,
With that ecstatic awe
Wherewith one looks into Eternity.

And then I knew that, though I had not heard
His voice before,
His quiet singing, like some quiet bird
At some one's distant door,

AND OTHER POEMS

Had made my own more sweet; had made it more
Lovely, in one of God's miraculous ways.

I knew then why the days

Had seemed more perfect to me when the Spring
Came with old burgeoning;

For somewhere in the world his voice was raised,
And somewhere in the world his heart was break-
ing;

And never a flower but knew it, sweetly taking
Beauty more high and noble for his sake,
As a whole wood grows lovelier for the wail
Of one sad nightingale.

Yet, if the Springs long past

Seemed wonderful before I heard his voice,

I tremble at the beauty I shall see

In seasons still to be,

Now that his songs are mine while Life shall last.

O now for me

New floods of visions open suddenly. . . .

Rejoice, my heart! Rejoice

That you have heard the Quiet Singer's voice!

ELUDED

DEEP in the night I heard
The rain's mysterious word.
(It was as if an old love spoke, a dead love
sobbed and stirred.)

Deep in the night the great voice of the rain
Called at my window-pane.
(A voice more sad shall nevermore sing at my
heart again.)

O deep within the night, the last stars gone,
I heard the rain pass on.
(No lost love stepped within my room—only the
pallid dawn!)

AND OTHER POEMS

A DISTANT SPRING

I WHO love the Spring so well
Shall be sleeping, some glad day,
When her hosts come back to dwell
In their old, familiar way.

I shall live, alas! no more
In some distant April hour,
When the Spring flings wide her door,
Calling leaf, and bloom, and flower.

I shall sleep—but I shall dream
In my home beneath the ground,
And my slumbering heart shall teem
With its visions deep, profound.

I shall know, ere you will guess
(Though with life I have no part),
What new golden loveliness
Stirs within the old earth's heart.

I shall hear the first soft sound
When the Spring is born anew,
And rejoice, beneath the ground,
At the bliss to come to you.

THE QUIET SINGER

And the dreams that I shall dream,
In that Spring when I am dead,
May arise until they seem
Blossoms white and blossoms red!

SONG

I SAW the day's white rapture
Die in the sunset's flame,
But all her shining beauty
Lives like a deathless name.

Our lamps of joy are wasted,
Gone is Love's hallowed light;
But you and I remember
Through every starlit night.

THE QUIET SINGER

THE SILENCES

I LEFT the throbbing city's thundering mart
For the great patience that the hills impart,
For the white quiet of the steadfast hills (O the
great hills' deep heart!)

I left the clamor of the world; I flew
Back to the olden peace I one time knew,
Back to the waiting restfulness, back to the heart
of you!

AND OTHER POEMS

AUGUST IN THE CITY

THE brooding hours, through the dull after-
noon.

Pause, while a torrid sun flames in the sky.
(O heart of mine, dream of a long, cool dune,
Where breezes wander by!)

Hemmed in by granite walls, the very paves
Grow worn and weary with the ceaseless heat.
(O heart, dream of a shore where foam-flecked
waves
Surge, crash, and wildly beat!)

The sad hours creep toward the dim light of
dusk—
Ah! how each laggard moment slowly goes!
(O heart, dream of a garden filled with musk
And the sweet scent of rose!)

The sun goes down at last, and lo! a breeze
Pours through the mighty cavern of the streets.
(O sleeping heart, dream of unsheltered seas
Where the glad, fresh rain beats!)

THE QUIET SINGER

THE LOVER—IN APRIL

THOU hast come back to me!
(Thou who didst die a year ago,
And slept so many days beneath the snow)
Thou hast come back to me!
Now that the buds break on the hawthorn-tree,
And the old gladness of the earth revives,
Thou hast come back to me
In the dear hyacinth and white anemone.

The Spring's great resurrection is thine own!
This fragrance of young blossoms is thy breath;
This silence is thy spiritual tread—
Thou art no longer dead!
Who is it, dear, that saith
Thy body is in the bondage of strong Death?
Nay, from the darkness, on the light winds blown,
Thou hast come back to me
In the dear hyacinth and white anemone!

AND OTHER POEMS

SPRING RAPTURE

ONCE more the Spring's exultant joy
And flowery dream have come to pass;
Once more the birth of hawthorn white,
The green revival of the grass.

Again the pageant of the leaves,
The fragrance of the cherry-boughs;
Again the April glamour comes,
Again the young Spring's wild carouse!

O heart of mine, once more for you
The world awakes with bloom and song;
Hushed are the voices of old Grief,
And vanished is the face of Wrong.

The April pæan rings again,
Spring's flowery dream has come to pass,
And who shall weep when Love has given
The green revival of the grass?

THE QUIET SINGER

THE BOAST

I DO not need you now! Thus do I end
Our days together, O belovèd friend;
Thus do I shake all remnants of the past
Out of my life; and thus I say at last,
"I do not need you now!"

I do not need you now! Our love is done,
And in this hour of parting, one by one
I watch the years we spent together fade
Into the cold oblivion I have made.

I do not need you now!

I do not need you now! The faith is gone
That made our love, from dawn to silver dawn,
A thing most wonderful. Bravely I cry
(Exulting in the shame of my deep lie!),
"I do not need you now!"

AND OTHER POEMS

LOVE, THE VICTOR

TIME was, O Love, when I a vassal knelt,
Obedient, at the footstool of thy throne ;
When all my life was thine—yea, every thought
Thy very own.

Yet, when I hungered most, and prayed that thou
Wouldst give to me some little that I gave,
Thou didst but mock me, knowing what I was—
Thy willing slave.

Yet, though fast bound in shackle and in chain,
Pride rose in me, and thou wert cast aside ;
And long I blessed the day when thou from me
Wentst forth and died.

How long ago it was I broke my thrall !
How long since I have kept apart from thee,
Vowing that nevermore my heart should know
Thy tyranny !

And yet to-day I felt the old desire,
After long years of freedom from thy reign ;
And I have dreamed, full many a night, of Love's
Exquisite pain.

THE QUIET SINGER

No strength of mine can hold thee back, O Love!

I thought that I was safe beyond thy will;

But after long, long years, lo! here am I,

Obedient still!

AND OTHER POEMS

THE FOOTFARER

NOW that Spring is in the land,
Now that April wakes the wood,
I would take my scrip in hand,
Roving with old Solitude.

I would leave the haunts of men,
All the rabble of the mart;
I would be a child again,
Close upon my Mother's heart.

Being kin to every star
In the marvellous Spring nights,
I would journey forth afar,
Drinking in long-lost delights.

For the world was made for me,
I who love her music so;
I was meant for Arcady,
Where the April tides sing low.

I would lie upon the breast
Of my Mother all day long—
She who eases my unrest
With her musical low song.

THE QUIET SINGER

She it is who calls me forth
When the Springtide winds begin,
That, in faring south or north,
I can cease to think of sin ;

Yea, and even when the rain
Of sweet April falls on me,
I can hear a loved refrain
In the welcome minstrelsy ;

Glad because I am without,
Following my vagrant will,
Putting all my cares to rout
When I feel the first new thrill.

Mother ! I would forth with you,
I would take your outstretched hand ;
Let us fare amid the dew,
Now that Spring is in the land.

AND OTHER POEMS

MIRACLE

THAT in your absence I can feel this thrill
Pulsing my inmost soul ; that I can know
Such wonder and such ecstasy, until
I marvel at the heights whereto I go,

Deem it not strange, belovèd ; every hour
Is white with consecration pure and true ;
Then, wherefore wakes my heart like some glad
flower ?
O hush, and hark ! There came a thought of
you !

THE QUIET SINGER

A MOTHER

IT rained all day the day she died,
And yet she thought it sweet and fair;
She said the sunlight kissed her hair,
And then she slept, all satisfied.

It rained all day; she woke again,
And whispered that the sky was blue.
Ah me! thank God she never knew
How cold and dreary fell the rain.

So like her life! It rained all day,
And yet she thought it all was bright;
She loved and toiled through day and night—
She never thought the skies were gray.

THE KING

I *AM the king of a wide domain, and you deem
it a wonderful thing;
But the kingly height is a terrible height—God
pity the lonely king!*

Heed this, O you who envy me my purple, and
pomp, and clan;
Thank Him who made you, and made us all, that
He made you a Common Man!

What of the pride and the glory of name, the
absolute wealth of the land,
When what I need and crave the most is the
clasp of a comrade's hand?

But king am I of a vast domain, and crowned by
a foolish fate,
While a foolish world bows down to me and dares
to call me great.

My ships fare forth to the open sea, my mariners
speed afar,
Where the sweet adventure, the risk, and the loss,
and the wonderful conflict are.

THE QUIET SINGER

My soldiers fly to the far-off hills at the sound of
the cannon's call,
But the helpless king, and the lonely king, he
bides in his palace hall.

O for a glimpse of the wide, great world, and a
taste of the life that is true—
A taste of the life that is yours, and yours! O for
the larger view!

To march, uncrowned, with the eager throng that
moves on the white highway,
To know their mirth, their tears, their loves, the
hopes of their golden day;

To sing with them, and to lift his voice with the
horde of the Common Men—
This is the prayer the monarch prays, again,
again, and again!

Out in the heart of the golden Spring I know
where banners wave
More bright than the pennons that are mine own,
more beautiful and brave.

Crown me with freedom of the hills, and place
upon my lip
A song of the honest brotherhood and the noble
fellowship!

AND OTHER POEMS

Make me the equal of other men! O let it not be
said

No humble heart may walk with me the foolish
height I tread!

Let me out where the teeming flood pours toward
Life's open sea,

And let me walk the way of man with all hu-
manity.

Bitter the heart that beats in my breast when I
hear the clamor of life,

And know that the world so far from me gives
me no part in its strife.

They prate the joy of rulers; yea, they cry the
glory of kings,

But few may know what loneliness about a great
throne clings.

Sadly I reign in my palace place, and none may
understand

How much I crave the world's turmoil and the
clasp of a comrade's hand.

*I am the king of a wide domain, and you deem it
a wonderful thing;*

*But the kingly height is a terrible height—God
pity the lonely king!*

THE QUIET SINGER

A ROSE WHISPERS

I AM the flower within her garden-close
She cast aside;
Ah! had she plucked me, verily, God knows
I had not died.

I would have fought a battle with strong Death,
And bloomed anew,
Finding sweet resurrection in her breath
The long day through;

And had she laid me on her trembling heart,
New fire had sprung
Into my crimson petals' every part,
And made me young.

Yea, I for her had lived again; but O,
She passed me by,
And now, neglected, in the night I go
Softly—to die!

AND OTHER POEMS

AWAITED

ALTHOUGH I dare to say
My heart untarnished is from day to day,
'Tis not, O Love, that any strength of mine
Has kept all white the shrine.

But as I now look back
Across the years that span the weary track,
All the dear deeds I ever strove to do
Were done because of you.

All the white thoughts I had
Were but pure flowers, one day to make you glad;
Every improving act, each little grace,
Humbly, dear one, I trace

Back to my hope of you,
Long, long before your wondrous face I knew.
Ah! your white coming, silent and unseen,
Made me and kept me clean!

THE QUIET SINGER

A BALLAD OF THE NATIVITY

NOW it was Mary dreamed this dream,
Ere yet her Child was born
In that poor place in Bethlehem,
In that poor stall forlorn,
Before the dark of night had fled
From the white face of morn.

She fell asleep, and dreamed this dream,
That filled her heart with fear—
That she had died that One might live
Whose life was very dear,
And that she never saw His face
Or dried His earliest tear.

She dreamed that her own life went out—
Her life divinely sweet—
Ere she could press His little hands
Or kiss His little feet,
Or know the bliss that was to make
Her womanhood complete.

She dreamed she died before she knew
The trembling joy to say,
“I am a mother—I, whose life
So bleak was yesterday!
I know at last that perfect hour
For which all women pray!”

AND OTHER POEMS

O strangely came this dream to her,
This dream of utter woe,
While through the dark Judean night,
Above the wastes of snow,
A star flamed in the midnight heaven
And set the East aglow.

And ere the pallid dawn had come
To break her sacred rest,
She wakened, with a startled moan,
And tears the bitterest,
And lo! she felt two little hands
Clasped close upon her breast!

THE QUIET SINGER

UNDERSTANDING

FLASH of steel and crash of drum—
Love that way has never come.
But adown some quiet night
She has winged her silent flight,
And no heart but failed to hear
Her soft presence drawing near.

Boom of guns in long array—
Love has never gone that way.
But with quiet step and slow,
Hand upon her pale lips—so
Love goes out in some white dawn—
O we know when she has gone!

AND OTHER POEMS

THE DEPTH OF LOVE

BECAUSE he brought no tears to her dear
grave,

Many and many there were
Who whispered, when no single sign he gave,
"He never cared for her."

But down within the silence of his soul
A surging ocean swept;
Yet none could see the current onward roll,
The tides that never slept.

Because I stand in silence when your eyes
Look softly into mine;
Because no words to my poor lips arise,
Because I give no sign;

There are, perchance, those who would dare to
say
There is no heart in me.
Belovèd, let them cry! Be glad that they
Can never sound our sea.

THE QUIET SINGER

UNANSWERED

HOW shall I know her, God, in that great
world,

After the grief of this is past and gone?
How shall I know her when our souls are hurled
Like atoms thro' the night? On that white dawn
How shall I know it is her face that I shall look
upon?

Wan spirits, we shall journey thro' Thy land,
The mist-like wraiths of what we used to be;
O shall I know the pressure of her hand,
And shall I recognize her call to me,
As I do now? Is love the same thro' all eter-
nity?

How shall I know her, God? I ask but this,
To be assured—a child who is dismayed.
Let me be told that I shall feel her kiss.
. . . There is no answer! Lo! my faith is
weighed.
Ah! somehow I shall know her, God. Hush!
Love is not afraid!

AND OTHER POEMS

SURRENDER

SO hard I strove to crowd you from my heart,
You who once loved, but love me now no
more;

Yet all the weary night your face would start
Out of the blackness and the midnight's door,
And smile—to mock me!—as it did of yore.

Why is it that your name is on my tongue
When the gray dawn first creeps across the
hill?

Why is it, ere the lark his song has sung,
Your voice is in my brain, and singing still
The old, old love that taunts my weakened will?

There is no shore that can resist the sea!
O I have striven to forget, in vain;
So give me now the olden memory,
Come, if you will, through distance and bleak
rain;
Come, if you will, although you bring me pain!

THE QUIET SINGER

RAIN ON THE ROOF

L OUD on my roof the regiments of rain
March with their old insistence, and I hear
Troop after troop, column and troop again,
Sweep by before Dawn's shining hosts appear.

O armies of the night, your rhythmic tramp
Lures me at last to the dim bourne of Sleep,
And you and I find peace in some far camp
Where only Silence and her legions creep.

AND OTHER POEMS

THE HOUSE OF THE HEART

I HAVE made empty all my heart for you!
I have shut out the mad noise of the world,
Closed every window, made the doors fast, too;
And from each chamber to the winds have
hurled
Old thoughts, old base desires, old sins, old
stains;
Yea, swept my heart as all the earth is swept by
April rains.

Down the long corridors there is no sound!
I wait but for your entrance through the door,
Your footfall in my heart's great vacant ground,
Your voice to sing and sing forevermore—
Your voice alone to make the old house thrill
With the vast knowledge that your love wakes all
that once was still!

There shall be gladness when you come to me!
Your thoughts, not mine, shall enter in this
place.
O Love! behold how white each room shall be,
And you shall make all whiter of your grace!
Come to this quiet house, this heart of mine—
It is no longer part of me, but all is thine, is
thine!

THE QUIET SINGER

REMOTE

SOMEWHERE, perchance, there is a love
That one day I may gain;
But O, it is so very far,
Through darkness and the rain!

And yet more distant than the dream
Of joy that still may be
Is that old love gone softly down
The aisles of Memory!

AND OTHER POEMS

THE GLADNESS OF SPRING

WHEN Spring, with blossom-haunted lanes,
With sudden gusts of rippling rains,
Came dancing down the glad young year,
How soon my heart forgot its fear!

When I had heard the lyric note
That floated from the robin's throat,
How soon the sad song in my breast
Sought a deep silence, a deep rest!

Now who had dreamed the April rain
Could cleanse a heart of all its pain?
And who had thought one little bird
Could hush a soul's discordant word?

THE QUIET SINGER

A SUNSET

FAR in the gold-embroidered west
The round and red sun lay,
Like a great wound upon the breast
Of the slow-dying day.

Night, and a murmur from the east ;
I heard the wind's voice roll
Out of the dark, a solemn priest,
Speeding the day's white soul.

AND OTHER POEMS

ESTRANGEMENT

IT was so hard to say good-bye,
To drift apart from you;
But harder still to live the lie
That swept the long years through.

O better far it were that we
Down different paths should stray;
Better that we should part than be
So close, yet far away!

THE QUIET SINGER

DEATH AT MORNING

SHE died when dawn was sweeping o'er the
land,
When morning-glories lit the gleaming wall;
And one who watched her, holding her pale hand,
Whispered, "Alas! that she should miss it all!"

The early sun, risen from his dark night,
Flamed his great banners when she went away;
And one said, "Lo! at coming of the light
She has gone forth, and lost the beauteous
day."

But she, from her poor mortal house of pain
Gladly released, went singing to God's place,
And cried, "Dear Lord, after the bleak world-
rain,
I cannot bear the brightness of Thy face!"

AND OTHER POEMS

RENEWAL

APRIL, when I heard
Your lyrical low word,
And when upon the hawthorn hedge your first
white blossoms stirred,

Something strangely came—
Something I cannot name—
And touched my heart, and cleansed my soul with
a reviving flame.

When the yellow gleam
Of your hosts that stream—
Jonquil, buttercup, and crocus—made the world
a golden dream,

Something, April, said
To my heart that bled—
Bled with old remembrance—"Lo! the grief-
strewn days are fled!"

Sursum corda! Now,
When blooms the apple-bough,
April, of your pity, let your light rain kiss my
brow;

THE QUIET SINGER

Heal me, if you will ;

Bathe my heart until

I am one with your first primrose or the shining
daffodil !

AND OTHER POEMS

A MAN'S PRAYER

I DO not crave that deathless fame
That is the valiant soldier's part;
I only wish to write my name
Within a woman's heart;

To make my love so perfect seem
The world shall say, my glad days through,
"That life he lived—it was a dream
Too wondrous to be true!"

THE QUIET SINGER

A SONG OF CITY TRAFFIC

I HAVE heard the roar and clamor through the
city's crowded ways
Of the never-ending pageant moving down the
busy days—
Coaches, wagons, hearses, engines, clanging cars,
and thundering drays!

I have watched them moving past me as the day
began to dawn;
I have watched them creeping onward when the
sun's last light was gone,
Like a serpent long and sinuous, gliding on, and
on, and on.

Never, since I can remember, has this long pro-
cession ceased;
Rather has the surging torrent ever lengthened
and increased,
And the human traffic changed not—prince and
beggar, fool and priest.

They have marched, and still are marching,
through the city's wilderness—
O the sadness of their going who shall know or
who shall guess?

AND OTHER POEMS

Prophet, lady, sage, and merchant, cap-and-bells
in wisdom's dress!

Ah! poor throngs of the great city, drops within
that mighty stream,
When the night descends upon you and the streets
are all agleam,
Of some distant hills of silence do your worn
hearts never dream?

When the brazen voice of traffic and the loud call
of the mart
Strangle all the hope within you, bruise your soul
and break your heart,
Do you think of some far valley where life plays
another part?

Sometimes in your startled slumbers, ere the morn
comes up again,
Do you dream of some blue mountain or some
wonderful green glen,
Where the silver voice of silence calls the weary
world of men?

O perhaps you dream, as I do, of the quiet wood-
land ways;
But the long procession lures you through the
fleeting nights and days,
And you miss the old, old beauty for which still
your spirit prays;

THE QUIET SINGER

Miss it all, and, missing, weep not ; join once more
the bands of trade,
Join again the city's tumult, that long clamoring
parade—
Join once more the foolish struggle which not
God, but man, has made!

Losing love and losing friendship, making life
but wounds and scars ;
Missing beauty and calm rapture, and the shelter
of the stars—
Poor, sad mortals, hearing only noise of wheels
and clang of cars!

AND OTHER POEMS

SELFISHNESS

THERE is so much that you can give to me—
I cannot bring you anything at all,
Save worship and the little, tender words
My lips let fall.

But you—oh, you can feed my hungry heart,
And you can fill my chalice soul with wine,
Till I grow drunk with drinking, marvelling
At love like thine.

How selfishly I come to beg all this,
I who can give you nothing, dear, at all,
Save worship and the little, grateful words
My lips let fall.

THE QUIET SINGER

REMEMBRANCE

LOVE was with me yesterday—
In the dusk she crept away;
But I am light-hearted yet,
Since I never can forget.

All the world may marvel why
Joyful with great joy am I;
None may know who cannot say,
“Love was with me yesterday!”

AND OTHER POEMS

AERE PERENNIUS

As long as the stars of God
Hang steadfast in the sky,
And the blossoms 'neath the sod
Awake when Spring is nigh;
As long as the nightingale
Sings love-songs to the rose,
And the Winter wind in the vale
Makes moan o'er the virgin snows—
As long as these things be
I would tell my love for thee!

As long as the rose of June
Bursts forth in crimson fire,
And the mellow harvest-moon
Shines over hill and spire;
As long as heaven's dew
At morning kisses the sod;
As long as you are you,
And I know that God is God—
As long as these things be
I would tell my love for thee!

THE QUIET SINGER

THE GREAT AND SILENT THINGS

HOW silently the years, in long procession,
Come gliding down the corridors of Time
to us!

O quietly they come and take possession
Of our dear youth, and weigh us with oppression;
How great they seem, and how sublime to us!

How softly Love into the heart comes creeping!
How wonderfully low is her command to us!
She wakes the soul that erstwhile lay a-sleeping,
She dries the eyes that were but lately weeping,
Revealing all her Promised Land to us.

And Death! O with a velvet tread she finds us,
And teaches us her awful lore and mystery;
Like sheaves of wheat are we what time she binds
us,
And in a little sheet of whiteness winds us—
And this is all of our poor history!

O we who loudly cry our names in chorus
Across the mighty years, shall sooner, later,
Go humbly back upon the tide that bore us
To this brief life, as men have gone before us,
Softly to God, silent to our Creator!

AND OTHER POEMS

DISTANCES

I HAD a friend who went away
Over the distant sea,
But hill and tide can never hide
His gentle face from me.

I had a friend—he broke my heart,
Yet every shining day
We meet, but nevermore clasp hands. . . .
How far he is away!

THE QUIET SINGER

HAUNTED

THERE came a whisper in the night,
A little cry across the years;
And I who heard, in deep affright,
Awakened with unnumbered fears.

“It is some deed that I have done,
Some sin I wrought long, long ago;
But hush! am I the only one?
Wherefore am I then troubled so?

“For all men do some evil deed,
And some men falter, some men fall;
Do ghosts of Selfishness and Greed
Come back, O God, to haunt them all?”

Then came a whisper in the night,
A little cry across the years;
And I who heard, in deep affright,
Listened with wild, unnumbered fears.

*“I am the ghost of that pure deed
You might have done, but did not do;
I am the ghost of that good seed
You might have sown when Life was new.*

AND OTHER POEMS

*"And this it is that haunts you now,
That deed undone, that seed unsown;
Too late, too late to take the plough,
The Spring is fled, the May is flown!"*

And this I heard amid the night,
This voice that called across the years,
And when the dawn came, silver-white,
I was companioned with my tears.

THE QUIET SINGER

VILLANELLE

THE lilies whisper in the park,
Pale watchers in the heavy night,
Wan ghosts that haunt the fragrant dark.

How pure they are! Their figures stark
Stand as if waiting for Death's flight—
The lilies whisper in the park.

Beneath the blue electric arc
They crowd in long battalions bright,
Wan ghosts that haunt the fragrant dark.

I lean and listen, wait and hark;
Faint phrases float on pinions light—
The lilies whisper in the park.

The city sleeps. I pause to mark
These spirits marshaled for my sight,
Wan ghosts that haunt the fragrant dark.

Who knows the language of the lark?
Who gleans one word from flowers white?
The lilies whisper in the park,
Wan ghosts that haunt the fragrant dark.

AND OTHER POEMS

I COUNT THE DAYS

I COUNT the days, belovèd; but not those
When you are absent, though my heart well
knows
That they are bleak indeed. Rather I say
Unselfishly, as drifts each laggard day,
“Long, long ago, in Love’s eternal Spring,
We sang together, and new hours can bring
No greater rapture.” I am ever glad
Of those lost hours of beauty that we had;
And if within my heart I always hold
The memory of their shining threads of gold,
I fear not when you tread far-distant ways. . . .
O Love, our wondrous past! I count the days!

THE QUIET SINGER

FULFILMENT

THIS was my dream in May—to have one
bloom,

Fragrant with apple-scent and Springtide rain,
Live thro' the bleakness of the Autumn gloom,
Awakening all beauty in my room,

Hiding the dismal hills, quenching dull pain.

This was my dream in youth—to have you near

When the dark hours of age had crept on me;
To have you at my side when twilight drear
Told that the light of day would disappear;
To have you love me, O unswervingly!

These dreams were mine! . . . Dear heart, the
night is nigh,

No single flow'r blooms thro' November chill,
And you are vanished, lost—ah! who knows why?
But hush! Far, far within the vaulted sky,
One golden bud—a star—smiles o'er the hill!

AND OTHER POEMS

RESURRECTION

WHEN one had gone away
To join the quiet dead,
Bleak, bleak for me the day,
And dark the clouds o'erhead.
"Her voice I shall not hear again,
Nor see her smile," I said.

Yet when the Spring winds came
The sad earth to beguile,
I heard one call my name
Whose voice was lost erewhile;
And when the early violets blew,
Dear God, I saw her smile!

THE QUIET SINGER

TILL EULENSPIEGEL

EULENSPIEGEL, merry lad,
What a laughing life you had!
Prank and jest were yours by right
Or at noontide or at night,
And the simple tricks you played
On the spinster and the jade
Only helped sad hearts to be
Lighter through felicity.

If you knocked upon the door
Of a house you'd missed before,
How the little home would wake,
Laughing for your laughter's sake!
Never since Time was begun
Has Life frowned on harmless fun;
Never has there been a day
Filled too full of foolish play.

Let the somber folk and dense
Laugh at your young innocence;
Tricks that they have never guessed
(Many a little quip and jest)

AND OTHER POEMS

Play upon them till they take
Long, long leave of grieving. Make
Plots and plans of such design
As will cause old eyes to shine.

Trip your way into my heart,
Eulenspiegel! Let me part
With the sorrow and the tears
That are marching down the years.
Play your pranks with all of us,
In that way felicitous,
Till the darkness of our night
Blooms with laughter and delight.

THE QUIET SINGER

THE POET

BACK of his splendid song, O think of the
songs unsung!

Back of his painted dreams, the dreams that he
never reveals!

Behind each lyric of rapture

The songs that he cannot capture,

Save for his own delight, to keep his heart still
young!

But the songs that he never can sing—

Children created of one glad song that tells us
what he feels—

Some day they shall be uttered,

When far his soul has fluttered,

Sung by an unborn singer in a new and wonder-
ful Spring!

AND OTHER POEMS

THE FLAME

O MOTH, that yearns for me,
The whole world pities thee,
Foredoomed on heedless wing,
By mad fire-worshipping.

But sadder is my fate,
Who, when the night is late,
See thee in love come nigh,
At my caress to die!

When I would lend thee aid,
To death thou art betrayed;
Yea, I that love thee well,
I am thy heaven and hell!

THE QUIET SINGER

IN THE MEADOWS OF THE SKY

WHEN the great sower, Night,
 Lets down his sable bars,
He goes into his endless fields
 To plant his seed, the stars.

And then the wintry Dawn
 Comes with her icy hand,
And blights with snowy clouds the flowers
 In that wide, heavenly land.

AND OTHER POEMS

THE MOSQUES

THERE was a flower in ancient Fez
That (so the glowing legend says)
Has never lost its matchless light
From Summer dawn to Winter night,
Since Allah cast his pitying glance
Upon the city's wide expanse,
And, with all mercy in his eye,
Said, "One white flower shall never die."

So from the city's forest maze
Pure alabaster domes upraise
Their gleaming beauty through the dawn,
Or when the dusk of day is gone;
White flowers that blossom through the years,
And hush a people's solemn fears,
Pale blooms of wonder that shall last
Till Time, and Life, and Death are past.

THE QUIET SINGER

THE WOMAN'S WAY

THERE are things, I know, that are sad and
strange,
As the world swings round in the old-time way;
O Life is the same, though the seasons change,
And laughter and tears make our little day.
But one sad thing is the saddest of all,
Filling women's hearts with old regrets—
They take their love as a gift from above—
A woman remembers, a man—forgets!

You may say what you will, a woman's heart
Counts all as loss till she loves and lives
In the golden hours that seem to start
A new white world; and she always gives
All that she has, or dreams, or knows—
All that she feels—and she never regrets.
She gives her all, yet her meed is small—
A woman remembers, a man—forgets!

Men love to-day—and laugh to-night,
Forgetting a heart may break the **while**;
A woman loves in her strength and **might**,
A man forgets—at another smile!

AND OTHER POEMS

And the sad, mad world turns swiftly round,
And thus shall it be till the last sun sets;
A woman takes love as a gift from above—
A woman remembers, a man—forgets!

THE QUIET SINGER

IN THE NIGHT

I HEARD the footfall of the hail;
The armies of the sky
Were coming down amid the gale,
And rank on rank marched by.

I heard the thunder's cannonade,
The beating of his drum;
I saw the lightning's flashing blade—
The hosts of heaven had come!

The mighty legions crossed the roofs
And stormed the distant hill;
Faint grew the sound of tramping hoofs,
And lo! then all was still.

At morn I saw dead crimson leaves
Far o'er the wide world tossed;
And now the lonely Autumn grieves
For all that she has lost.

AND OTHER POEMS

HOPE

THE weariest watch must sometime end,
The dreariest Winter must one day close,
And under the cover that wraps the earth
Sleeps the Summer rose.

Did the Spring e'er fail of its mission sweet,
After the rush of the Northern snows?
Then why should we care, since under the earth
Sleeps the Summer rose?

THE QUIET SINGER

LOVE OF BEAUTY

WHO loves all beauty loves beyond that we
see ;

The gods give him a vision doubly blest ;
He sees the bloom upon the hawthorn-tree,
But blossoms, too, that are not quite expressed.

He hears the music in the lyric rain,
The lark's enraptured notes that wake the
dawn ;

But far behind them one diviner strain
That is not uttered till the first is gone.

AND OTHER POEMS

THE PROCESSION

THE gray year drifted out
As a tired love might go,
And there was no heart to breathe a song
Across the leagues of snow.
O the gray, sad year went out, went out,
And who was there to know?

The glad new year came in
As a white young love might come,
And through all the world I heard the sound
Of welcoming bell and drum.
O the glad new year came in, came in,
And hearts with joy grew dumb.

But the new year shall go out
As the old year went its way;
And the young love must grow very old,
Yea, old and wan and gray;
And thus shall it be till Time and Love
Die on a Winter's day.

THE QUIET SINGER

LOVE AND TIME

I SAID, "Love laughs at Time," before I knew
The perfect joy of wholly loving you;
So swift the days went hurrying to that Day
When we were one—Love swept us on the way.

But now—Time laughs at Love; for swifter yet
Speed years that seem as hours! The sun will
set,
The final curtain fall, our lives be done;
We will have lived—long years that seemed as
one!

AND OTHER POEMS

AN AUTUMN LEAF

UPON my parchment, sadly old,
The record lives of Summer's gold;
And in my veins there lingers now
The joy of Spring's awakening bough.

So I, like many a human heart
Wherefrom Life's shining days depart,
Keep valiantly some remnant yet
Of dreams we never quite forget.

THE QUIET SINGER

ONE MOMENT OF DOUBT

SUPPOSE you should forget,
After our love and tears,
To wait for me in that shining place
That lies behind the years!

Suppose I should forget,
After my lips are dumb,
To go to you, O heart of my heart—
Suppose I should not come!

Never yet was a soul,
The past remembering,
But who, one moment in the dark,
Doubted the coming Spring.

And never yet was one
Who on this earth has trod,
But for one instant told his heart
He doubted even God!

Wherefore then blame me, Love,
That, mortal that I be,
I stand one moment, lost, dismayed—
Then face eternity?

AND OTHER POEMS

PARTING

LEAVE me some fragment of our love,
Some remnant of our bliss,
That I may drink the joy thereof
Through days more bleak than this.

When Summer fares forth on the wind,
Do all her blossoms go?
Nay! Some white flower she leaves behind
To still the Autumn's woe;

And all her dear remembered grace
Lives on, because of this;
So of our love leave me one trace—
One last and deathless kiss!

THE QUIET SINGER

THE ROOM

NOW that my heart is empty,
Empty of you,
I marvel at the fullness
That once it knew.

How deep the space now vacant,
How vast and wide!
Or is it only greater
Since Love has died?

AND OTHER POEMS

AFTER DROUGHT

THERE came an army from the sky,
And surged across the parchèd plain;
I saw the hurrying hosts go by—
The blue battalions of the rain.

O mighty army (bringing peace!)
How bright your helmets seemed to shine!
Your cavalcades brought glad release,
For God was Captain of the line!

THE QUIET SINGER

INDIAN SUMMER

WHEN Eve grew old,
How many a time she must have dreamed
and dreamed
Of her lost Eden, with gardens all of gold,
And Springtide winds that whispered low, and
streamed
Quietly through the dim, hushed afternoon;
And, gray and sad, wept for her vanished June,
Until some thought of her lost Paradise
Lighted her old, old eyes!

So now the Year,
Banished from her young Joy and fragrant
hours,
Grown feeble with much longing, sad and sere,
Dreams once again of gardens white with flow-
ers;
And as she turns to brood upon the past,
Weary, autumnal now, and old at last,
Upon her face there shines the golden glow
Of June, lost long ago.

AND OTHER POEMS

AT NIGHTFALL

I NEED so much the quiet of your love,
After the day's loud strife;
I need your calm all other things above,
After the stress of life.

I crave the haven that in your dear heart lies,
After all toil is done;
I need the starshine of your heavenly eyes,
After the day's great sun!

QUATRAINS



PREPARATION

HOW long the violets 'neath the snow
Toiled ere they breathed the Spring!
How long the poet dreamed his song
Before his heart could sing!

THE QUIET SINGER

CERTAINTY

SHE knew that Love was dying—not so much
When Love's dear eyes were closed and
 blind to her,
As when, with patient word and tender touch,
 Love, day by day, alas! grew kind to her!

AND OTHER POEMS

THE FRIENDS

SHARE not thy joy with me, O friend the best,
Thou may'st forget me then—I shall not
care;
But shut me from thy grief the bitterest,
And mine own grief would be too great to bear.

THE QUIET SINGER

A WINTER DREAM

THE host of flakes that float thro' leafless trees
When pale December reigns in Autumn's
stead,
Are but the pallid ghosts of myriad bees,
Come back to woo the roses that are dead.

AND OTHER POEMS

SEPTEMBER

NOW at the grave of Summer stands
A priest, in purple vestments stoled,
And through the hills, his lifted hands,
There runs a rosary of gold.

THE QUIET SINGER

THE GOOD QUEEN

PALE ruler of the heavens, with lavish hand,
The spendthrift Moon arose,
And spilt her silver out across the land,
Alike on friends and foes.

AND OTHER POEMS

UNHAPPINESS

HIGH on the hills the miser, Autumn, sits,
Hoarding his wondrous wealth of treas-
ured gold;
Yet in the night I hear his grieving voice
In every wind that sweeps across the wold.

THE QUIET SINGER

CARE

SHE leaves upon our brows her written sign,
Where all may read, inscribed with perfect
art;
But O those marks the world may not divine—
Her hidden tracings on the human heart!

SONNETS

THE PROMISE

SHE said to him, "Unless, when I am dead,
From out the green sod of my lowly grave
A crimson rose should rise and softly wave,
Whispering words like those my poor heart said;
Unless this token of a passion fled
Should come to tell you all that you may crave,
Then you shall know I loved you not! Be
brave!
That rose shall bloom, and you be comforted."

But when she died, not only in the Spring,
When violets wake, and in the deeps of June,
Her lover saw a red rose lightly blow;
Not only did the golden Summer bring
Gifts for his heart, but 'neath the Winter moon
A passion-flower trembled thro' the snow!

THE QUIET SINGER

CITY CHILDREN

PALE flowers are you, that scarce have known
the sun!

Your little faces like sad blossoms seem,
Shut in some room, there helplessly to dream
Of distant glens wherethrough glad rivers run
And winds at evening whisper. Daylight done,
You miss the tranquil moon's unfettered beam,
The wide, unsheltered earth, the starlight
gleam,
All the old beauty meant for every one.

The clamor of the city streets you hear,
Not the rich silence of the April glade;
The sun-swept spaces which the good God
made
You do not know; white mornings keen and clear
Are not your portion through the golden year,
O little flowers that blossom but to fade!

AND OTHER POEMS

AFTER READING KEATS

DOWN his great corridors of sumptuous
sound

To-day I wandered once again. Each word
Seemed like the lyric rapture of a bird
Singing in Spring above the burgeoning ground.
O once again that old delight I found,
Once more the marvel of his voice I heard,
Until my spirit with new joy was stirred,
Hearing such music through his halls resound.

How beautiful thy palace, Poet blest!—
That room wherein is set thy Grecian Urn,
Thy Nightingale that sings at set of sun
Out in thy garden where my tired feet turn;
And in one chamber, back from his long quest,
That passionate lover, young Endymion!

THE QUIET SINGER

HOW BRAVELY NOW I FACE THE MARCHING DAYS

HOW bravely now I face the marching days,
With Youth's strong armor to defy the
years!

Nought now I know of the sharp sting of tears,
Nor of the bleak and solitary ways
Where Sorrow calls her children. Nought dis-
mays

My April spirit; and the night appears
Like some far-distant prospect without fears.
Youth, youth is mine, and youth's strong, fear-
less gaze.

But when the twilight shall at length abide,
And I have neared the shadowy bourne and
vast,

How will it be? . . . Shall the night overcast
My soul, and shall my sword have softly sighed
Back to its scabbard? . . . Nay, when Youth has
died,
Old Age shall take me tenderly at last.

AND OTHER POEMS

A BROKEN FRIENDSHIP

IF this be friendship—that one broken hour
 (O fragile link in all the loving years!)
Can cast our hearts asunder, Time appears
Frightful indeed, since all our vaunted power,
Wherewith we built high hope, like some strong
 tower,
Crumbles to dust, where earthly passion leers.
What of our laughter? Aye, what of our tears
That should have only watered Friendship's
 flower?

If this be friendship, I can never know
 Again the magic faith I boasted of;
One deed of mine has crushed the house of
 love,
And every stone to its old place must go.
Shame be to our endurance if we killed
The sinews that can help us to rebuild!

SONGS OF NEW YORK

FIFTH AVENUE AT NIGHT

L IKE moonstones drooping from a fair queen's
ears
The pale lights seem—
White gems that shimmer when the dark appears
And the old dream—

The ancient dream that comes with every night
Through the long street—
The quiet and the shadows, and the light
Tread of far feet.

THE QUIET SINGER

BROADWAY

HERE surge the ceaseless caravans,
Here throbs the city's heart,
And down the street each takes his way
To play his little part.

The tides of life flow on, flow on,
And Laughter meets Despair;
A heart might break along Broadway. . . .
I wonder who would care?

AND OTHER POEMS

DOWNTOWN

THE sun has gone, and from the ferryboat
That like a golden worm crawls through the
night,

I watch the myriad stars that round me float,
And, cityward, the honeycombs of light.

Tier after tier, they blossom in the dark,
Miraculously radiant, while I
Think of the toilers bent beneath each spark,
And breathe a little prayer for them, and sigh.

NEW BUILDINGS

THE turrets leap higher and higher,
And the little old homes go down;
The workmen pound on the iron and steel—
The woodpeckers of the town.

AND OTHER POEMS

THE LIGHTS

TEN thousand jewels flash out
When the darkness of night appears;
But O I sometimes think these pearls
Are ten thousand people's tears—

Ten thousand tears that are shed
Through the terrible strife of the day,
And doomed to shine through the city's night
Till the stars have faded away.

THE QUIET SINGER

TO A HURDY-GURDY

(Playing on Sixth Avenue)

HERE'S to you, brave Hurdy-gurdy,
Grinding out your happy tune
While the traffic round you rumbles,
In the city's Summer noon.

No one hears you! Yet the rapture
That you feel, despite our faults,
As you gaily give the measure
Of the latest merry waltz!

Trams are rolling all about you—
How the Elevated roars!
And above their noise and tumult
Your thin twanging vainly soars.

Good for you, poor Hurdy-gurdy!
Play, unheard, your little part;
Would that I could sing as you do,
With but half as brave a heart!

TRAFFIC

HOOFF-BEATS thundering on the paves,
Wagons crashing by.
(But O I dream of distant waves,
God's tent of open sky!)

Bells that clamor all day long,
Rush and roar of steam.
(But I have heard a robin's song,
If only in my dream!)

THE VOICES

I HEARD the voice of the city,
Calling again and again,
And into her arms there hastened
Millions and millions of men.

And I heard the voice of old gardens,
Of quiet woodland ways;
But few there were who would heed them
In the rush of the busy days.

The cities grow old and vanish,
And their people faint and die;
But the gardens are green forever,
Forever blue is the sky!

NEXT DOOR

WE saw the tapers burn
In the home so close to ours;
But however our hearts might yearn,
We dared not send our flowers.
"He will not understand," we said,
"Our loving thought of his loved dead."

O City! thus you hide
The pity in every heart!
Those who are at our side
You sunder a world apart.
A little barrier built of stone—
And my neighbor grieves—alone, alone!

THE QUIET SINGER

THE PARKS

THERE are green islands in the city sea,
Where all day long, the endless, passionate
waves

Beat, yet destroy not; and their quiet saves
How many a heart grown sick with memory!

Not derelicts alone are foundered there,
But children with the laughter of the May—
Bright, living flowers—in these glad gardens
play,
Knowing, yet knowing not, the town's despair!

God made the ocean, where tumultuously
The loud storms burst; and Babylon He made;
Yet all the hills are His, dim valley and glade—
There are green islands in the city sea.

AND OTHER POEMS

A CITY SUNSET

A CROSS the roof-tops of the town
I saw the flaming sun go down;
For some, another day of tears
Lay buried in the hurrying years.

The shadows folded; here and there
A yellow light began to flare.
For some, another golden day
Of gladness sped upon its way.

SONGS OUT OF THE ORIENT

A BAGHDAD LOVER

*(Being Certain Fragments from Scheherazade's
Songs in "The Thousand and One Nights")*

(TO GEORGE H. CASAMAJOR)

I

O QUEEN of Beauty, who hast conquered
kings,

O woman wonderful, in pity be
Most merciful to one who softly sings
Thy matchless glory; yea, to one who brings
His broken songs, sung but in praise of thee.

I am the prisoner of thy two eyes!

Roses nor lilies breathe a sweeter breath
Than thou, when Dawn's great minarets arise.
Thy breath is like a breeze from Paradise,
Yet languorous with the mystery of Death!

The Pleiades, which thro' the darkness blaze,
From thy great orbs have filched their wondrous light.

Only the stars, with their undying rays,
Shall make a necklace like a golden haze
To hang about thy throat, O woman white!

THE QUIET SINGER

II

To kiss her! 'Tis with musk-perfume to grow
Drunken with joy—delirium to know!
To feel her body bend 'neath my embrace,
See the carved marble of her lily face!
To kiss her! I am drunk who have no wine—
Wild ecstasy, wild ecstasy divine!
Dizzy at eve, at sundown my heart sips
The perfumed nectar of her lips, her lips!

AND OTHER POEMS

III

The praises of her beauty I shall sing,
Yea, though her beauty be my suffering!

Lo! one to me hath come and softly said,
"O thou who with Love's sorrowing hast bled,

"Rise! Here is Life's great music, Life's guitar,
Luring thy soul to some exquisite star!"

And I have said, "How can my poor heart sing,
Since I have felt Love's sharp and ceaseless
sting?"

THE QUIET SINGER

IV

If one should ask of me, when all afire
My ravished heart might be,
“What is thy wish, thine utmost dear desire—
One draught from some cool spring to drain,
or her white face to see?”—
I should make answer, tho’ I fainted sore,
Tho’ my pale lips were dry,
“Let me behold her, ere I pass the Door;
Let me drink of her pool-deep eyes—drink love,
drink love—and die!”

V

So much I love, that I
Faint with the joy I know;
Yea, for that joy is pierced
With the great thorn of woe!

So much I love, that I
Envy the cup she sips,
When over-long it rests
On her soft, crimson lips!

VI

What morn shall find thee, O departed one,
Under the fragrant dew?
Thou hast appeared, O gentle-hearted one,
Back to my famished view.
Clad in white vestments, thou who hast been ban-
ished
Out of this lonely place,
I saw thee once at dusk. . . . Now thou hast
vanished,
And left, alas! no trace!

VII

The myrtles of Damascus, when they smile,
Exalt my soul to some remote, high place—
But O thy face!

Roses of Baghdad, bathed in moonlight dew,
Make my heart drunk when all their joy it
sips—
But O thy lips!

VIII

O form to which the palms have lent their grace,
And all the jasmines given their perfume,
What lovelier form goes wandering thro'
earth's room?

O eyes to which the diamond lends its light,
And night its radiant stars,
What woman's eyes give forth a fire more bright?

O kiss more sweet than honey from her mouth,
What woman's kiss is fresher from the South?

O to caress thy hair! to feel my heart
Thrill against thine! . . . Then to gaze in thine
eyes,
And see the stars arise!

AND OTHER POEMS

IX

O tomb! within thy shadows can it be
My dear belovèd hides away from me?

O tomb, by Allah, tell me, lest I die,
Is all her beauty vanished utterly?

Have her vast charms been blotted out?—her
white
And pallid brow been lost in thy deep night?

Surely, O tomb! no bit of heaven is thine,
Who foldest close that wondrous love of mine.

Yet in thy depths, thy darkened depths, O tomb,
I see the stars shine and white lilies bloom!

THE QUIET SINGER

FROM A BAGHDAD WINDOW

(To RICHARD DUFFY)

I

LISTEN, O Love, to that far-distant strain,
The bulbul sings outside the city gate.
This is the twilight hour, all consecrate,
When his poor heart with love is full, or
strangely desolate!

Harken, O Love! Is it a note of pain
That passes down toward sunset's golden bars?
Lean close, lean close! Let us forget life's
scars,
And watch for night's transcendent train of
peace-bestowing stars!

AND OTHER POEMS

II

I shall forget the day's great heat
When in the night your heart shall beat,
In rhythmic measure, close to mine,
And thro' the dark your dear eyes shine!

I shall forget the torrid breeze
That swept all day the tall palm-trees,
When in the night, the quiet night,
Your lips meet mine for Love's delight!

III

This is mine hour of jubilation—this,
When my hot brow grows cool beneath thy kiss!

I am the weary desert, thou the dusk,
Bringing thy peace and soothing scent of musk.

I am that weary waste which all day long
Dreamed of thy starshine and thine evensong!

AND OTHER POEMS

IV

Belovèd, see, how on yon minarets
The sun's flames leap and shine;
And see, how on yon towering parapets
They glow like crimson wine!

O let me be as constant unto thee,
As steadfast as the sun,
Dawn after dawn to rise from dreams and be
Glad that the dark is done!

V

What night with all its pageantry,
Its web of golden dream,
Has made the heavens appear to me
Fairer than your eyes seem?

What silver of the early dawn
Has made your throat less white?
Give me your face to look upon,
And what of dawn, or night?

VI

O dome and spire, and mosque and shrine,
And temples built of gold
May lift their glory, glint, and shine,
Till all the years have rolled
In chaos to that brink of night
When Allah says the world shall lose its wonder
and its light.

But hush! O my belovèd one!
For our great love shall last
Through darkness and the shadowed sun,
Till Death itself has passed.
O we shall love, be unafraid,
When this pale city that we see in paler dust is
laid!

THE QUIET SINGER

A LOVER IN DAMASCUS

(TO AMY WOODFORDE-FINDEN)

I

FAR, far across the desert sands,
I hear the camel-bells;
Merchants have come from alien lands,
With stuffs, and gems, and silken bands,
Back where their old love dwells.

O my belovèd, far away
Are cities by the sea;
Yet should I go to far Cathay
For many a weary night and day,
My dreams were still of thee.

AND OTHER POEMS

II

Through the old city's silence,
Where the Abana flows,
O harken to the nightingale
Sing lyrics to the rose!

But through the dusk no answer
Is ever breathed or sung,
Tho' the bird's heart with pleading
The whole long night is wrung.

Yet well the lonely songster
Knows that the red rose hears.
. . . Ah, Love, I need no answer,
But let me see your tears!

III

Belovèd, in your absence I have told
My love for you to every little flower—
Vermilion, pink and purple, red and gold—
That blossoms in our fragrant-hearted bower.

And should I die ere you come back again,
Would not the rose my golden vows repeat?
Yes, every bloom would whisper through the rain,
And fling its perfumed message at your feet!

IV

How many a lonely caravan sets out
On its long journey o'er the desert, Doubt,
Yet comes back home laden with ivory,
With gold, and gums, and scarfs from oversea.

So went my lonely heart forth on its quest;
Through torrid wastes and parchèd ways it
pressed.
Empty and sad it left the city gate,
But came back with your precious love for
freight!

THE QUIET SINGER

V

If in the great bazaars
They sold the golden stars,
Belovèd, there should be
A necklace strung for thee,
More wonderful than any known or dreamed of,
Love, by me.

If wealth could buy the mist
By Dawn's pale, pearl lips kissed,
Belovèd, there should be
A white veil wrought for thee,
More marvellous than that faint film which hangs
above the sea.

VI

Ah! when the dark on many a heart descends,
Our joy more swiftly runs;
Heart of my heart, our great love never ends,
Though set ten thousand suns!

Allah be with us when that last deep night
Shall wrap us round about;
And Love be with us, with her steadfast light,
When Death our spark blows out!

THE QUIET SINGER

CERTAIN FRAGMENTS FROM THE
ARABIC

I

YOU who are wise to-day,
What of your knowledge when Life's little
play
Is ended, and the curtain rustles down—
What of your wisdom then, your great renown?

Make me not wise, like you;
I envy neither sage nor prophet Jew.
Beggared, each journeyed here, and sought for
fame,
And lo! went forth as poor as when he came!

II

I did not know the nightingale could fling
Into one song the whole wild soul of Spring;
I did not know—until I heard him sing.

I did not know that Love held all of bliss—
Yea, all that ever was, and all that is;
I did not know—until I felt your kiss!

III

O in that hour when both of us are dead,
When all of Life and Love at last is said,
Will some red rose bloom o'er our graves to tell
how our hearts bled?

Or will a lily, in the starlit night,
Lift its pale wonder and its waxen light,
To tell the world how our poor hearts loved with
a love most white?

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